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# the gull

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## Alaska in April

Outstanding scenic and wildlife photography highlight the film, "The Age of Alaska", to be shown at our April meeting. It also describes the historical and economic background of the issues involved in the challenges facing Alaska today. The film, along with an update on the Alaskan legislation, will be presented by Phil Schaeffer, director of the National Audubon Society's Whittell Education Center in Tiburon.

The program will be held at the Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda, Berkeley at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 20.

—RAY HASEY, *Program Chairman*

## Field Trips Calendar

**Sunday, April 2—Upper San Leandro Reservoir.** A repeat of the March trip which was canceled due to mud and rain. A three mile walk to view wintering waterfowl, grassland and woodland species. Bring lunch and boots. Meet at **10 a.m.** at Valle Vista staging area. Take Highway 24 to the Orinda exit, turn right onto Moraga Way and drive five miles to the end. Turn right on Canyon Road and go one and a half miles to staging area. Leaders, Sue and Bob Watson (254-4077). (✓)

**Saturday, April 15—Lake Merced, San Francisco.** This is an excellent time for spring migrants. Following the morning walk in the area of North Lake we will drive to the beach to see nesting bank swallows. Meet at **8:30 a.m.** at Lake Merced Circle at the south end of Sunset Blvd. (#72 Muni bus). Leader, Dan Murphy (564-0074).

**Sunday, April 16—Tilden Park, Berkeley.** Meet at **9 a.m.** at the Nature Center for a trip around Jewel Lake and vicinity to see spring migrants as well as resident birds. Bring lunch. Leader, Delpha de-Timofeev (632-5176).

**Wednesday, April 19**—Mini trip to **Lake Merced**, San Francisco. Meet at **9:30 a.m.** at the parking lot at the south end of Sunset Blvd. (#72 Muni bus). Leader, Aileen Pierson (587-4163).

**Saturday and Sunday, April 22-23**—**Caswell Memorial Park**. Take Highway 580 to Tracy and through Manteca. Just past Manteca turn south on Highway 99. Watch immediately for sign to Caswell State Park; the turnoff is only a mile or two down the road. Meet at **9 a.m.** on Saturday at entrance. Bring lunch. Meet at **9 a.m.** on Sunday at the same place, but we will be back by lunch time. Come for either or both days; you can camp overnight. Driving time is about 2½ hours from the East Bay. This is a beautiful park on the Stanislaus River; this year, however, please call leader beforehand to check on possible flooding. Leader, Gene Hull (525-6893). (✓)

**Tuesday, April 25**—**Redwood Regional Park**, Oakland. From the MacArthur Freeway (580), the 35th Ave. off ramp leads to Redwood Canyon Road. Enter (there is a fee) and park near the miniature railway. Bring lunch. Leader, Bill Parsons (533-1948). Meet at **9 a.m.**

**Sunday, April 30**—**Mines Road**, Livermore to Patterson for a great variety of birds including Lewis' Woodpecker, Costa's Hummingbird and maybe a Roadrunner. The range of habitat is from valley orchards to desert-like country east of Mt. Hamilton. Meet in Livermore at **8 a.m.** at the parking lot across from the ARCO station on S. Livermore and 2nd St. Be prepared to drive on mountainous roads. Bring lunch or buy food and drink at the Branding Iron around noon. Leader, Art Edwards (447-3720 Livermore). (✓)

Future trips are planned to the Yosemite area, one in June and the other in July.

**Carpooling:** You can arrange for carpooling by calling Kate Partridge at 849-1951 (home) or 642-5784 (work: 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.) for trips with a (✓). If you are not an enthusiast about driving or want a passenger or two to share expenses, please call. Passengers should be willing to share all expenses incident to the trips including mileage and any fees that may arise. Thanks to all of you who participated during January and February. It worked well; even eliciting an admission of some guilt from one leader who had not called and felt badly about it.

—FIELD TRIPS COMMITTEE

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## February Observations

It comes as no surprise that the majority of February's interesting birds were individuals found earlier and settling down to winter locally. Paramount among these were the three **Emperor Geese** at Limantour, Point Reyes National Seashore, through at least 25 Feb. On that date a White-fronted Goose, rare to the coast, was also present (BH). Another Emperor Goose at Moss Landing in Monterey County 20 Feb. (SJ) was probably the same individual seen a month earlier in that area. The Monterey area had more than its share of lingering rarities: the **Yellow-billed Loon** found in late January was seen from a boat in Monterey Bay 12 Feb. (VR *et al*) and from shore later that week; the **Roseate Spoonbill** at Moss Landing was sporadically reported through 13 Feb. (EM, SL); a Harlequin Duck surfed on the Monterey shore and the **Ruff** at Pacific Grove was found throughout the month. Greenwood Park, Pacific Grove, continued to host two Tennessee Warblers and a "Baltimore" Oriole; El Carmelo cemetery had a Palm Warbler 29 Jan. (SL); Castroville contributed two Tropical Kingbirds through at least 19 Feb.; Pajaro shared its engaging **Magnolia Warbler** all month and Watsonville held the American Redstart.

Continuing winterers elsewhere included a Harlequin Duck inside San Francisco Bay at Brisbane (PW); Northern California's first eastern Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*S.v. varius*)—an immature female—at Tiburon (this race may be "split" someday and considered a good species), and a Harris' Sparrow at Palo Alto as well as one in Berkeley.

Pelagic birders were amazed at this year's flight of Short-tailed Shearwaters; more than 100 were recorded off Bodega Bay 4 Feb. (GMCC *et al*) and 18 were counted in Monterey Bay 5 Feb. (DR, JM). Are these birds truly becoming more common near our coast or are we just now identifying the large numbers that have white on the underwings? These individuals, at times as many as two-thirds of the total seen, can be identified by those with experience with Sooty Shearwaters by the shorter, slimmer bill, browner bodies, duller and more patchily distributed white on underwings and more rounded head. More exciting were single **Flesh-footed Shearwaters**—almost unknown in winter—off Bodega Bay (GMCC *et al*) and Monterey Bay 5 Feb. (DR, JM *et al*). Two Manx Shearwaters were also in Monterey Bay on the latter date.

The "female" **Tufted Duck** at Limantour reported last month was either replaced by a young male in February or molted into that plumage. A high-plumaged Tufted Duck was discovered at Lake Hennessey, Napa County, 31 Jan.-3 Feb. (JP *et al*). This brings the total of this rare wanderer to at least four this winter, doubling the previous records.

Among interesting pelagic species found inland were the lingering Oldsquaw at Lake Merritt in Oakland through 20 Feb.; a Parasitic Jaeger at Lake Hennessey 28-29 Jan. (JP) and a Red-throated Loon picked up, strangely, on the corner of 12th and Market in Oakland 20 Feb. Palo Alto had a Glaucous Gull 4 Feb. (DC), but much more exciting were the two **Sharp-tailed Sparrows** found there during high tides of 6-8 Feb. (PW, JM *et al*). This secretive species apparently winters in tiny numbers in California's coastal salt marshes.

To the north of us, in Humboldt County, were Northern California's best birds. Late February produced a **Black-headed Gull** (5th state record), an adult **Little Gull** (7th state record), two wintering **Snowy Owls**, a cooperative **Blue Jay** (6th state record) and California's first wintering **Worm-eating Warbler**. Spectacular!

*Observers:* Dorothy Calabrese, Bob Hirt, Susan Jones, Susannc Luther, Eugene Makishima, Guy McCaskie, Joe Morlan, John Parmeter, Van Remsen, Don Roberson, Peter Wendelken, Keiko Yamane.

—DON ROBERSON, *Observations Editor*  
2244 Encinal #5, Alameda, CA (865-2462)

## Year List Mania



Among the more esoteric pursuits of hardcore birders is the Year List. Simply put, a Year List is the total number of species seen by a birder from January 1 to December 31 within a given locality. Many birders keep them (perhaps even you) but when confronted openly will deny it. However, from time to time a serious attempt is made to set an all-time Year List record. In 1977 a number of us aspired to such a record in California. A brief history of that undertaking follows.

On a national level, the sport of Year Listing was popularized in the early 70s by Ted Parker, Kenn Kaufman and Floyd Murdoch. The current record was set in 1976: Scott Robinson found 658 species in the U.S. and Canada by American Birding Association standards. In California, Guy McCaskie began piling up high state totals in the late 60s. It even became clear that California's "magic number"—400—was possible. In 1973, Rich Stallcup and Richard Webster battled to new heights. But the fabulous birding year of 1974 sent Rich Stallcup spiraling to



the record to match: a total of 434 species, not counting introduced birds (such as Rock Doves, Starlings and House Sparrows). Jon Dunn took top honors in 1975 and 1976, but Rich's record looked fairly solid.

A high Year List is the result of careful planning, a willingness to "chase" a rare bird at a moment's notice the length of the state, concentrated and exhaustive birding at prime localities at the right times, ability to find and identify rare birds and more than a liberal slice of luck. By diligent effort, one may reach the 400 mark by recording all the regular breeding and visiting species. A number of these such as Ruffed Grouse, Black Rail, Elf Owl, Great Grey Owl, Whip-poor-will, Vermilion Flycatcher, Gray Jay and Cardinal are very elusive and local and require long trips to specific areas. But even at that, one must see numbers of very rare birds even to consider challenging the record.

At the beginning of 1977, when Guy McCaskie and Elizabeth Cooper began their Year Lists in San Diego, they had no inkling of the wealth of the year to come. By the time I joined the race in March, some of the outlines of a fine year were emerging. But none imagined how good the Salton Sea would be during the summer or Monterey Bay in the fall. Guy, Elizabeth, Donna Dittman, Louis Bevier, Paul Lehman, Doug Morton and I began comparing lists by spring as it was clear the year was starting well.

During the winter, one attempts to record as many regular species as possible. There are special searches for geese and ibis in the Central Valley, southern herons in San Diego, Rock Sandpiper at Bodega Bay, Short-tailed Shearwater and Ancient Murrelet offshore, American Oystercatcher on Anacapa Island, Sharp-tailed Sparrow in coastal salt marshes. Winter also has good owling. By March one may find booming Sage Grouse in the Great Basin. All of us failed, however, to find the elusive Ruffed Grouse in Humboldt County. Most, however, picked up such rarities as Anhinga, Little Gull, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Eastern Phoebe, Bohemian Waxwing, Rusty Blackbird and Common Grackle during the winter.

Spring brings its hordes of migrants and returning breeders. We all visited Morongo Valley, the Colorado River and the Salton Sea (which presented the first of its line of treats—Little Blue Heron and Semipalmated Sandpiper). Donna and I picked up a Yellow-throated Vireo in early May, while Guy and Elizabeth recorded a Yellow-crowned Night Heron. On May 21 many of the hardcore endured the all-night climb up a treacherous wash to the small fir forest on Clark Mountain, just over the California line from Las Vegas, Nevada. Here are some of the state's toughest breeders—Flammulated Owl, Whip-poor-will, Gray Vireo, Virginia's Warbler, Hepatic Tanager and Grey-headed Junco. Just as we were descending, Van Remsen heard and tracked down a

singing male Gracc's Warbler for the topping on the cake.

The Death Valley marathon was next: ten days of searing heat and constant driving searching the deserts for vagrants. Rewards included the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Gray Catbird, many eastern warblers (led by a singing Golden-winged) and more Common Grackles. In early June most Year Listers split up to bird their local coasts or the Farallones, but some converged again to view the fabulous singing White-eyed Vireo on Point Reyes, June 6 and 7.

Summer is a slack time, fortunately, because the pace was fierce during the spring. But the mountains must be visited for their specialties and late arrivals like the Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Black and Chimney Swifts must be looked for. Pyrrhuloxias nested for the first time in California in a remote desert wash, which required another excursion. But it was while Donna and I were suffering heat prostration after a vicious climb for a Painted Redstart in an obscure mountain range that other Year Listers were watching the first state Wilson's Plover in sixty years. We missed it by an hour.

In early July both Guy and I broke the magic 400 mark at the Salton Sea. Virtually every exciting bird one could hope to find there was discovered during June through September: Blue-footed Booby, Magnificent Frigatebird, White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill and Black-bellied Whistling Duck. On September 1 a delightful boat ride in a tiny putt-putt on Lake Havasu on the Colorado River produced a Brown Booby.

By fall it was clear that a run at the record could be made. September through October is, of course, the prime vagrant time of the year. Those of us in Northern California concentrated on Point Reyes and the mouth of the Carmel River; in Southern California the hottest spots are near San Diego and Santa Barbara. Northern highlights which I missed were Buff-breasted and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and Yellow-throated Warbler; southern gems (numbers of which, strangely, I saw) included Reddish Egret, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Red-throated and Sprague's Pipit, Yellow-green Vireo, Worm-eating Warbler and Scarlet Tanager. The San Diego pelagic trip in September had Red-billed Tropicbird and Long-tailed Jaeger, but was totally eclipsed by a trip out of Monterey Bay in early October which produced six storm-petrels (including Galapagos), Flesh-footed Shearwater, South Polar Skua, Craven's Murrelet and the best bird of the year, the Streaked Shearwater.

Early October also saw the surpassing of Rich's incredible mark. The Yellow-green Vireo tied me with the record and the Reddish Egret put me over. However, Guy began narrowing the gap between us in late October through November. Desert trips were good: many sparrows, Prothonotary Warbler, Rusty Blackbird. Furnace Creek attracted a Scarlet-headed (Streaked-backed) Oriole which Guy saw the first day—

it took me three all-night drives until it was finally recorded in early December. It was on one of those fruitless attempts, however, that Donna discovered and I photographed the first good state record for Varied Bunting - a male which many saw in ensuing days.

In December we all visited the Snow Bunting at Monticello Dam in Napa County and a Coue's Flycatcher in Orange County. But Guy and Elizabeth gained a critical bird with the Snowy Owl in Arcata. Donna and I missed it by a day, as we also missed the Bewick's Swan in the San Francisco Bay Delta. Fortunately, the Emperor Geese at Limantour in the Point Reyes National Seashore arrived in time for the final year bird. On December 30 Guy and I were tied at 444. But he managed the Bewick's Swan that morning to forge ahead. He returned to San Diego only to hear of the Emperor Geese. He, Elizabeth and Louis retraced their long (twelve-hour) drive to Northern California for their final year bird.

Thus it ended: Guy at 446; I finished at 444. Donna and Elizabeth tied at 441, Doug Morton had 436, Louis Bevier 434 and Paul Lehman 428. Incredibly, six birders had tied or broken the old record. Can another birder, another year, surpass these marks? It's possible, but it will be very difficult. Year Lists such as these are major undertakings. I drove 40,000 miles in California in 1977, took two plane trips chasing birds, visited the Salton Sea thirteen times and took ten pelagic trips from five ports. Many of these trips were with other birders; we shared experiences and they often informed me of good birds. Thanks to them all.

Fully 475 species, not counting introduced birds, were recorded in California in 1977: an enviable record to shoot for. But for now the 1977 results are worth savoring.

—DON ROBERSON

Editor's note: A book more fully describing the 1977 year and full information on how you may build your own State or Year List will be published by the American Birding Association in spring, 1978. Its title: *Birder's California: How to build a California Year List and an account of just such an undertaking* by Don Roberson. Watch for it.

## Conservation Notes

The U.S. Forest Service is now reviewing its plans for completion of the "GO" road (Gasquet to Orleans) in the Siskiyou Mountains area of California. The road, if finished, would greatly increase logging and the resulting effect of erosion and siltation on many prime salmon and steel-head streams would be heavy. In addition to passing through country having religious significance to three Native American tribes, it would



eliminate any chance of this huge, rugged area ever being included in the long proposed Siskiyou Wilderness. Send any comments to R. Burke, Six Rivers National Forest, 710 E St., Eureka, CA 95501.

A bill now in the state senate would take the first step in protecting riparian habitats in California. SB 932, introduced by Senator Dunlap, would provide for a Department of Fish and Game survey and analysis of the status of riparian plant and related wildlife communities in the state. Riparian vegetation and forest appear along waterways and provide extremely valuable habitat for all types of wildlife species.

Drilling for gas and oil off the northern and central California coast is now considered likely and, if approved by the Secretary of the Interior, leases will probably go on sale in February, 1981. While the offshore geology of much of the north coast is fairly unknown, the Eel River Basin—a prime drilling site—is considered one of the most unstable underwater canyons in the state because of its seismic activity. Between the deadline for nominations/comments and Interior's leasing decision, environmental impact studies will be done on the effects of offshore drilling, according to the Bureau of Land Management.

The 1978-79 "duck stamp" features a nifty painting of a colorful Hooded Merganser drake by wildlife artist Albert Earl Gilbert. Also called the Migratory Bird Hunting Conservation Stamp, it costs \$5. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchases additional wetland habitat for the national refuge system with the money. Duck hunters are required to buy them, but birders and wildlife enthusiasts are also encouraged to do so. Since 1934, when the program began, it has made possible the acquisition of more than two million acres of prime waterfowl habitat.

—CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

## Spring Birding Classes

### Piedmont

Susanne Luther will again teach two birding classes through the Piedmont Adult School for the spring quarter, April 3–June 10. "Week-day Birding in the Bay Area" will explore many beautiful areas nearby with field trips planned to see as many species of birds as possible during the ten week period. Migration as well as courtship and breeding behavior make this a very exciting time to be in the field. Class time is 9 a.m.–12 noon on Thursday mornings. Appropriate for beginners and intermediate birders.

"Springtime Birding in California" will meet Tuesday evenings 7–9:30 p.m. with arranged field trips on weekends. Classroom presentations will emphasize courtship and breeding behavior of birds as well as identification of species and California habitats. Two weekend field trips are



planned, one to Eureka and one to Yosemite, as well as one yet to be arranged.

For more information call Piedmont Adult School at 653-9454.

## Alameda

The Alameda Adult School is offering a spring quarter class entitled "Seminar in Field Ornithology" taught by Don Roberson. This class will be devoted to spring birding in California and will include weekend field trips to the Southern California deserts (migrants at Morongo Valley and a try for the Condor), Honey Lake to watch booming Sage Grouse, and the Sierra to search for mountain specialties. There will also be a pelagic trip from Monterey.

Six Wednesday evening classes (7–10 p.m.) in March through May will be preparatory for these trips and will study flycatchers, warblers and others. The first class was March 29, but you may enroll at any time. There is a \$5 tuition fee.

For further information, call the school at 522-6710.

## Fremont

A birding class with Alice Hoch as instructor is being offered through the Fremont Adult School. The class will visit a different area each week to study birds during the spring; some of these places are Ed Levin Park, Central Park, Mines Road, Chesbro Reservoir, Tilden Park and Sunol Regional Park.

Classes are held 9:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m. on Tuesdays in Room 14 of the Fremont Adult School, 4700 Calaveras Ave. The first class was held March 28, but you may enroll at any class. There is a \$4 fee. Call 793-6465 for more information.

## Albany

Tom Harvey will teach a class, "Marine Birds and Mammals," through the Albany Adult School. Classes began Monday night, March 27 (7-9 p.m.), but you may enroll at any time. For more information call the school at 526-6441.

# Pelagic Trips

## Farallon Islands

GGAS sponsored trips to circle the Farallon Islands are scheduled in April, May and June. We hope to see albatross, shearwaters, puffins and other species of nesting and migrating sea birds. See the February *Gull* for further information.

## Monterey Bay

Two pelagic trips out of Monterey Bay, sponsored by the American Birding Association, are scheduled for Monday, May 1 and Tuesday, May 9. Birds often seen around this time include Black-footed Albatross, Pink-footed Shearwater, Pomarine Jaeger, Sabine's Gull, Arctic Tern. Rarities sometimes encountered are Flesh-footed Shearwater, South Polar Skua, Horned Puffin and Laysan Albatross.

To participate in the May 1 trip, send \$15 per person along with a stamped self-addressed envelope to Don Roberson, 2244 Encinal Ave., #5, Alameda, CA 94501.

For the May 9 trip, send \$15 per person plus names of all persons for whom you are making reservations, your phone number, and a stamped self-addressed envelope to Joe Morlan, 3815 San Pablo Ave., Emeryville, CA 94608.

## MIKE WIHLER'S TEXAS BIRDING TRIP

An April birding trip to Texas led by Mike Wihler has had two last minute cancellations. The dates for the trip are April 16-28. For more information call Mike immediately at 664-6567.

### OFFICE NOTES:

**Library** - The GGAS library is slowly growing and being used by more and more members. If you have any books pertaining to wildlife, conservation and/or environmental issues that you are willing to donate, please contact the office (843-2222). We also have a small section on botany. All donations are tax deductible.

**Never on Saturday** - The GGAS office will no longer be open on the third Saturday of the month. The office is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## Roberta J. Long

Her many friends were saddened to learn of Roberta Long's death in December. She had been in poor health for about a year, with several hospitalizations.

Roberta was deeply interested in conservation and had been an Audubon member for many years. She was a past president of GGAS and later served on the Board as a director. She was an excellent birder and field trip leader—among the best. An excellent botanist, she was the backbone of the California Botanical Club and, as a volunteer, worked

regularly on the Academy of Sciences' picture collection cataloging the bird and plant illustrations.

Her other interests were broad. She was active in her church and in the Bay Area Hearing Society. She was a wonderful cook and gracious hostess who loved to entertain, a fine bridge player and a warm and loyal friend. In line with her philosophy of helping, Roberta left her body to medical science.

We miss her.

## School Bus Sought at ACR

Bay Area schools are finding it increasingly difficult to budget the \$140 to pay for a bus for a day trip to Audubon Canyon Ranch, so the ACR Board and the ACR Volunteer Council are attempting to help them meet the cost. Your contribution will be gratefully received. Please send your check, made out to ACR, to Shoreline Highway, Rt. 1, Stinson Beach, CA 94970, indicating that the money is for this project.

## Gifts and Bequests

### FOR GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY

#### In memory of:

Harvey R. Smith .....	Marge and Leonard Ackeret
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Roberta Long .....	GGAS
Edward Rowe .....	Mrs. George S. Johnson

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In honor of Elsie Roemer .....	Mrs. Hubert Fry
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## THE GULL

April 1978

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Mail for all individuals listed above should be sent to the GGAS office.

Send address changes to office promptly; Post Office does not forward *THE GULL*. Monthly meetings: third Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Joint membership — local and national \$15 per year (individual); \$18 (family); includes *AUDUBON* Magazine and *THE GULL*; to join, make checks payable to National Audubon Society and send to GGAS office to avoid delay in receiving *THE GULL*. Membership renewals should be sent directly to the National Audubon office. Subscriptions to *THE GULL* separately \$3 per year; single issues 30¢. High school and college student membership \$8.50 per year. Senior citizen individual, \$12.00; senior citizen family, \$15.00.

The Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. was established January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948.

*The Gull* deadline is the first of the month for the following month.